

The Paper

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№44 April 2003



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Blood money a quantification of the unspoken war agenda

WILLIAM RIVERS PITT

"In the counsels of Government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the Military Industrial Complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists, and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes."

— President Dwight Eisenhower, January 1961.

The Project for a New American Century (PNAC), is a group founded in 1997 that since its inception has been agitating for a war with Iraq. PNAC was the driving force behind the drafting and passage of the Iraqi Liberation Act, a bill that legalised the ultimate designs behind such a conflict.

PNAC has funneled millions of taxpayer dollars to a Hussein opposition group called the Iraqi National Congress (INC), and to Iraq's heir-apparent, Ahmed Chalabi. Chalabi and the INC have, over the years, gathered support for their cause by promising oil contracts to anyone that would help to put them in power in Iraq.

The PNAC have created a new group called The Committee for the Liberation of Iraq. Staffed entirely by PNAC members, The Committee has set out to educate Americans via cable news connections about the need for war in Iraq. This group met recently with National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice regarding the ways and means of this education.

PNAC members include: Vice President Dick Cheney, one of the PNAC founders, who served as Secretary of Defence for Bush Sr; I. Lewis Libby, Cheney's top national security assistant; Secretary of Defense

Donald Rumsfeld, a founding member; Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz; Eliot Abrams, prominent member of Bush's National Security Council, who was pardoned by Bush Sr. in the Iran/Contra scandal; John Bolton, who serves as Undersecretary for Arms Control and International Security; Richard Perle, former Reagan administration official and present chairman of the Defence Policy Board; Randy Scheunemann, President of the Com-

The [US] President, his father, the Vice President, a whole host of powerful government officials, along with stockholders and executives from Halliburton and Carlyle, stand to make a large profit through this war. Long-time corporate sponsors from the defence, construction and petroleum industries will likewise profit enormously.

mittee for the Liberation of Iraq; Bruce Jackson, chairman of PNAC, who served as vice president of weapons manufacturer Lockheed-Martin; and William Kristol, noted conservative writer for the *Weekly Standard*.

The men from PNAC are in a perfect position to see their foreign policy schemes, hatched in 1997, brought into reality. They control the White House, the

Pentagon and Defense Department, by way of this the armed forces and intelligence communities, and have at their feet a Republican-dominated Congress that will rubber-stamp virtually everything on their wish list. The first step towards the establishment of this Pax Americana is, and has always been, the removal of Saddam

Hussein and the establishment of an American protectorate in Iraq. It has been widely reported that Dick Cheney, before becoming Vice President, served as chairman and chief executive of the Dallas-based petroleum corporation Halliburton. During his tenure, Halliburton did a brisk \$US73 million in business with Iraq.

Halliburton and Brown & Root have worked closely with governments in Algeria, Angola, Bosnia, Burma, Croatia, Haiti, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Somalia during the worst chapters in those nation's histories.

Brown & Root, a subsidiary of Halliburton, has won a share of the \$US900 million government contract for the rebuilding of post-war Iraqi bridges, roads and other basic infrastructure. This is but the tip of the financial iceberg, as oil wells will also have to be repaired after parent-company Halliburton puts out the fires.

More ominously is the building of permanent American military bases. There are twelve permanent US bases in Kosovo today, all built and maintained by Brown & Root for a multi-billion dollar profit.

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The Carlyle Groups is another company with a vested interest in war on Iraq. Carlyle, a private global investment firm with more than \$US12.5 billion in capital under management, was formed in 1987. Its interests are spread across 164 companies, including telecommunications firms and defence contractors. It is staffed at the highest levels by former

members of the Reagan and Bush Sr. administrations. Former President George Bush is himself employed by Carlyle as a senior advisor, as is long-time Bush family advisor and former Secretary of State, James Baker III.

United Defence, a weapons manufacturer based in Arlington, has been acquired by the Carlyle Group. United Defence provides the Defence Department with combat vehicle systems, fire support, combat support vehicle systems, weapons delivery systems, amphibious assault vehicles, combat support services and naval armaments.

Specifically, United Defence manufactures the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, the M113 armored personnel carrier, the M88A2 Recovery Vehicle, the Grizzly, the M9 ACE, the Composite Armored Vehicle, the M6 Linebacker, the M7 BFIST, the Armored Gun System, the M4 Command and Control Vehicle, the Battle Command Vehicle, the Paladin, the Crusader, and Electric Gun/Pulse Power weapons technology.

There are a number of depths



The bloodied hands of PM John Howard featured at a recent peace rally in Melbourne.

PHOTO: REGIS MARTIN

ThePaper

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The Paper is funded from subscriptions and a not-for-profit media support fund. Contact: info@thepaper.org.au

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to the contributors, editors, production crew and all who help with distribution.

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Gangs of Jakarta hit leading magazine

MARGIYONO

Around two hundred gangsters surrounded the editorial office of Indonesia's leading magazine Tempo on March 8th. Twenty persons entered the office and beat Tempo's chief editor Bambang hari Murti and his editorial staff Ahmad Taufik and Abdul Mannan.

The public near the offices of Tempo suspect a businessman called Tommy Winata as being behind the attacks because of his close ties to the military and police and his \$11.8 billion bid to rebuild Tanah Abang market being reported on by Tempo. Tempo's report had alleged that the old Tanah Abang market had been intentionally burnt down by Winata's gangs to persuade the municipal government to accept Winata's bid.

Police who came to the scene of the beatings failed to detain any gangsters and instead escorted the chief editor and his staff to the police station. At the police station, the editor and his staff were beaten a second time by the gangsters.

The beatings at Tempo shocked and provoked journalists in Jakarta to move the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) to launch

together with other groups in other cities, the Anti-Gangsters Movement. At the launch, Jakarta's radical lawyer Azas Tigor Nainggolan proclaimed,

"The police must arrest Tommy Winata! If the police do not arrest him, we will arrest him in our own way...!"

Violence against journalists has increased throughout Indonesia during the last few months. Gangsters intimidated not only Tempo, but also leading law magazine Forum and have attacked Non-Government Organisations (NGO) like KontraS (Committee Against Involuntary Disappearances and Protection to the Victims of Violence) and Humanika.

According to the advocacy department chairperson of AJI, Bayu Wicaksono,

"Military and police do the most violence actions against journalists, followed by para-

militaries and unidentified gangsters...

"We always protest all kinds of violence against Tempo, photojournalist of Pikiran Rakyat in Bandung and violence against reporter of Batam Post that happened weeks before attack on Tempo," said Atmakusumah Astraadmadja, chairperson of Indonesia's Press Council.

Violence on journalists has increased since the military, police, paramilitary, and gangsters linked up. Extensive protests and coverage on gangsters has provoked the Indonesian parliament to investigate Tommy Winata and the National Police Commander Da I Bachtiar.

"It is silly things that the police did not arrest the gangsters with reason that the victims did not complain to the police. Actually, the gangsters beat the editors in front of police eyes", said J.E. Sahetapy, a member of parliament.

Gangsters' terror has scared journalists around Indonesia and has substituted government censoring that was abolished by the new Press Bill. Journalists remember Muhammad Fuad Saifuddin who was murdered by gangsters backed by police and

local government in 1996. No court, until the present day, has punished anyone for the murder. "Saifuddin Trauma" has driven editors in Indonesia to meet and reach into agreement to unite in resistance against gangsters.

Since March 17th, Indonesia's dailies, magazines, and dotcoms publish the 'Journalists Against Gangsters' symbol, publishing the following statement:

"We, Indonesian journalists, are now declaring our resistance against gangsters. Gangsters' actions have disturbed both the freedom of information, and the security of business life, scaring both street traders and foreign investors, and security for the rest of the people. The worst thing happens when the gangsters are now in association with the state apparatus."

Public pressure forced the police to arrest four of the gang members who were involved in the Tempo beatings, but failed to apprehend their boss, Tommy Winata.

Margiyono is a journalist involved with Indymedia Jakarta.

Blood money continued

to be plumbed in all of this. The Bush administration has claimed all along that this war with Iraq is about Saddam Hussein's connections to terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, though through it all they have roundly failed to establish any basis for either accusation. It would be one thing if all of this was based purely on the ideology of our leaders. It is another thing altogether to consider the incredible profit motive.

The President, his father, the

Vice President, a whole host of powerful government officials, along with stockholders and executives from Halliburton and Carlyle, stand to make a large profit through this war. Long-time corporate sponsors from the defence, construction and petroleum industries will likewise profit enormously.

Mussolini, dubbed The father of Fascism, defined the word in a far more pertinent fashion. "Fascism," said Mussolini, "should more properly be called

corporatism, since it is the merger of state and corporate power."

Boycott the French, the Germans, and the other 114 nations who stand against this Iraq war all you wish. France and Germany do not oppose Bush because they are cowards, or because they enjoy the existence of Saddam Hussein. France and Germany stand against the Bush administration because they intend to stop this Pax Americana in its tracks if they

can. They have seen militant fascism up close before, and wish never to see it again. Would that Americans could be so wise.

William Rivers Pitt is a "New York Times" bestselling author of two books - "War On Iraq" (with Scott Ritter) available now from Context Books, and "The Greatest Sedition is Silence," available in May 2003 from Pluto Press. Scott Lowery contributed research to this report.

Brazil elects first working-class President

KARINA SMITH, DANIELLE MIGUELETTO
& PETER FLETCHER

In November 2002, Brazilians voted overwhelmingly for the Partidos dos Trabalhadores (Workers' Party), otherwise known as the PT. It is led by Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, an ex-metal worker and union leader who was born in one of the poorest regions of Brazil.

The election of the Lula-led government is a landmark in Brazilian political history: previous governments were dominated by the economic elite, both urban and rural, and served the interests of economic superpowers such as the United States. The Workers' party has missed out on election victory three times since its inception and, despite the distinct class stratification of Brazilian society, Lula has become the country's first working-class president.

Lula has been the leader of the PT since its inception in 1980. He was the leader and founder of the Metal workers' union, which he formed with his brother Frei Chico in 1969.

The PT membership is a multi-ethnic mixture of academics, grassroots activists, and experienced politicians. Lula's key ministers are all experts in their fields and represent a diverse cross-section of Brazilian society. Two of Lula's most prominent ministers are of African descent: Gilberto Gil and Benedita da Silva. Gilberto Gil, one of Brazil's finest musicians and a long time social justice activist, is the Minister for Culture. Benedita da Silva, former

deputy mayor of Rio de Janeiro, is Minister for Social Action. Silva grew up in the favelas, or slums, of the city she eventually governed, and continued to live there whilst working as a politician.

Over the years Lula has received negative press on the issue of his appearance and working class origins. Media attention was paid to his bushy beard, denim jeans, rural accent, and monolingualism. In previous election campaigns, Lula was outspokenly anti-US and, among other things, promised radical left-wing economic reforms, such as the curtailment of IMF loan repayments, should the PT win office.

In the 2002 election campaign, Lula changed his approach. He mastered the sound byte, donned a nice suit, trimmed his beard, and adopted an urban accent. In keeping with this new style, the main platforms for the 2002 campaign were about social public policy. The PT was elected in the hope that it will address the severe socio-economic disadvantage suffered by the majority of Brazilians, many of whom do not have access to their basic human rights. There is

no welfare system; child labour is common; and many subsist by working in the informal labour sector shining shoes, or hawking low value goods on the streets or beach.

The contrast between the haves and the have-nots in Brazil is acute. In 2002, the minimum wage was between 180 Reals (\$AUS90) and 220 Reals (\$AUS110) per month. Compare this with the earning potential of a professional engineer, who can expect to make between 4000 to 5000 Reals per month, or a banker who can make 10,000 Reals per month.

The PT's long-term economic plans are focussed on developing a strong Brazilian economy, and an economic alliance with other South American countries in the

agrarian reform.

PT's tactical change has pleased many on both sides of politics. The Brazilian business community seems pleased with Lula's victory. The pro-US orientation of previous governments had worked to the detriment of local business. Further, the PT won the support of many middle-class Brazilians fed up with living in a society with such distinct social and economic barriers. Despite predictions to the contrary, Lula's first meeting with US President George W. Bush in December 2002 was amicable.

However, the PT's 'face-lift' has not been greeted with applause from all quarters of the political spectrum. Some PT supporters are disappointed with what they consider to be the

During the most repressive years of the military dictatorship, when many dissidents either disappeared or were exiled, Lula spent time in prison for political activism. Whilst his election has destabilised class barriers in Brazil, the formation of the Lula-led government has also subverted racial barriers, which tend to go hand-in-hand with class in Brazilian society.

form of a trade agreement. This will reverse the economic policies of their political predecessors, who looked to the US and Europe for trade relationships. The party's internal social programs include improved enforcement of environmental protection laws, addressing the problems faced by indigenous communities, and

weakened political stance taken by Lula in his first 100 days as President. Continuation of payments on Brazil's massive foreign debt, and Lula's revamped physical appearance, are viewed as an exercise in conservative public relations. It is suspected that the PT's politics have shifted from Left to Centre. Right wing media

commentators, such as *The Economist's* Michael Reid, have predicted that Lula's first term in office will be marked by errors due to his political inexperience rather than radical reforms based on ideology.

Nonetheless, there are those who view Lula's political rhetoric and revamped image as a deliberate strategy to gain power, not a signal that the PT has lost its radical edge. At the recent World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, a spokesperson for ATTAC, a French non-government organisation, pointed out that every left-wing organisation in the world would be studying the PT's strategy on how to gain political power and, more importantly, how to overcome huge obstacles to implement social and economic change.

Many people are anxious about the PT's success in bringing about genuine social change given the number of military coup d'états in South America's history. There are those who believe, however, that Brazilian civil society has become much stronger since the 1960s, and that the response to the deliberate destabilisation of the Lula government would result in such severe civil unrest that the coup leaders would be quickly deposed. Whether or not the PT succeeds in introducing revolutionary reforms, its election has broken the conservative stranglehold on Brazilian politics, strengthening the power of Brazil's grassroots movements.

How the media covers Gulf War Two

TERRY CANTWELL

Media coverage of the 1991 Gulf War confirmed the old adage that truth is the first casualty of war. The major news networks, mainly CNN, returned spectacular images of smart bombs and cruise missiles destroying Iraqi military targets with pinpoint accuracy. We saw or read little about the human consequences of Operation Desert Storm.

Twelve years on, there remains a public perception that the 1991 Gulf War was a clean, surgical operation with few human casualties – other than the odd bit of collateral damage. Of course, this is not what happened. In 1991, only 9% of missiles struck military targets.

Many of the coalition's smart bombs destroyed civilian installations, including hospitals and bomb shelters. Thousands of surrendering Iraqi conscripts were bulldozed alive in the southern desert, or incinerated as they retreated along the Basra Road, in what one US soldier described at the time as a 'turkey shoot on the Highway of Death.'

The public was not exposed to this carnage for two reasons. First, because the US military, having learnt from Vietnam, tightly controlled the flow of information to the press, and second, because one media network, CNN, was so technically ahead of its competitors it had a virtual monopoly on the reportage.

Months before the war

started, CNN installed a direct satellite link to its communications headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. While other network journalists battled with Iraq's archaic and cranky telephone system to file their reports, sometimes paying up to \$400 for a 20-minute phone report with no pictures, CNN was shaping how history now remembers Desert Storm. But while CNN had all the gadgets, it didn't have the journalism quality to challenge the military spin.

Technology gave CNN the edge in the first Gulf War, but twelve years on, that technology is widely available and is smaller, and cheaper. CNN will not have the breaking-news monopoly it had in 1991. In this war, it will have to battle for exclusive footage with Fox, MSNBC, BBC and Al-Jazeera, all of who have state-of-the-art communications systems already in place. As Reuters' Technical Operations Manager, Keith Mitchell recently told *The Online Journalism Review*: "If war does break out, we don't think we'll be

left wanting in terms of our technical infrastructure."

Communication technology will offer a new perspective on how the war will be reported. For the first time reporters will be able to file stories from the war zone in real time, without the aid of camera crews and production staff. Well-equipped journalists can now carry mobile studios in their backpacks. During the recent Afghanistan conflict, the Qatar based Arab news agency, Al-Jazeera, embarrassed Western news agencies with its web-streamed profiles of Taliban leaders and exclusive footage of bombed Afghan cities. Al-Jazeera's use of Internet technology and raw journalism has

analysts greater access to its ground troops. Reporters will live with the troops, undergo military training, and learn how to cope with a chemical weapons attack.



Urban art, Sydney Rd, Brunswick, Melbourne.

While other network journalists battled with Iraq's archaic and cranky telephone system... CNN was shaping how history now remembers Desert Storm.

allowed it to quickly become a credible alternative news agency. The South African Broadcasting Corporation is now considering ditching CNN and using Al-Jazeera for its 24-hour coverage of the coming conflict.

But technology is only as good as the journalist using it. In an attempt to placate the media, the US military says it will allow jour-

But their closeness to the troops may influence the tone of their reporting. We may see many soldier-profile type stories, as the military attempts to portray the human face of the coalition effort. Many journalists are uncomfortable about this arrangement. They see it as a cynical attempt to manipulate news content.

The UK *Guardian* newspaper

predicts the phenomenon of weblogs may challenge traditional reporting during the coming war, as reporters file electronic war diaries from the conflict zone. It says: "No one should be surprised if the first news of an invasion of Iraq comes from a blog which will then cascade around the 'blogosphere' like an instant chain letter before surfacing in the traditional media."

The Guardian has established its own web log, or internet diary, to merge a diversity of reporting into one space. Its Iraq log features links to the latest reports, features and photos from Iraq.

Clarence Wyatt, Associate Professor of history at Centre College and author of *Paper Soldiers: The American Press and the Vietnam War*, says the new technology is very exciting, but he is sceptical about the prospects for better quality coverage in the Gulf.

"The ground rules prohibit any live coverage of an on-going engagement," he said. "So the kind of real-time coverage that's long been anticipated will be limited to rear area stuff, I would guess. Anything really hot being covered live will be accidental."

Terry Cantwell is a journalist, a commercial radio producer and a "Verandah" editor.

Australia's Afghan ancestry

MARNI CORDELL

Racquel Austin-Abdullah has old memories of being driven through the dry, saltbush landscape near Broken Hill in outback NSW, and feeling at home. She remembers her stepfather describing nearby Wilcannia as a "no good blacks' town", and wondering how it was, if the place was so wrong, that she could feel so right there.

At 29, Racquel now lives in Alice Springs with her 17-month-old daughter Milosh. Inside her small flat, a photo of a full-bellied woman, standing pregnant and proud next to a camel, dominates a wall. The picture was taken just weeks before Milosh was born. In black and white, Racquel is a classical Middle Eastern woman, with a strong face and dark smile. In real life her face is much softer and lighter, but her eyes – pure light green and arrowed – draw a clear path to the tracks of her ancestry.

Racquel is a descendent of the Northern Frontier Province Afghan camel traders that came to Australia in the late 19th century. The 'Afghans' as the camel traders became known, were Afghan, Pakistani and Northern Indian men who transported goods to remote and otherwise unreachable areas of outback Australia before the advent of the motorised transport industry.

Bourke and Wills brought the first cameleers to Australia as early as 1860, but many more soon followed, single or without their wives, with the hope of making their fortunes in the desert. Although never easily accepted in to white Australian society - their strictly religious and tribal culture commonly attracted fear and persecution - they quickly became an essential part of white man's survival in the outback, as their long camel trains were able to travel into waterless areas of desert where bullocks and horses could not.

Racquel's family history also ties her to the indigenous Barkindji people, a decimated Aboriginal nation from the Darling River region near Broken Hill. A departure point for camel trading routes to South Australia and beyond, Broken Hill was also home to many Ghantowns; the small villages of tin shanty constructions that sprung up around the edges of major towns to house the excluded Afghans.

It is thought that Racquel's great grandfather met her great grandmother, a Barkindji woman, when he and his camel train had been stopped there for a pastoral or mission station visit. Their son, her paternal grandfather, grew up in a nearby Aboriginal mission.

The Barkindji people, like so

many indigenous tribes to Victoria and NSW, were caught right in the heartland of colonial development. By the late 1800s, their land, livelihood and culture had virtually been decimated by pastoral occupation.

In the early 1900s, with their major food sources gone, the Barkindji turned to police rationing centres for survival. Supplies were sparse, and they were still required to supplement with hunting and gathering.

Many Barkindji ended up in missions, some forcibly placed and others through being convinced, after desperation and hunger set in, that a better life awaited them there.

Her Irish grandmother was just a 14-year-old girl when Racquel's father was born to her grandfather: a Barkindji/Afghan man from Lake Cargelligo Mission. Her father was adopted out at birth on advice from the local church, and was brought up in Adelaide by a couple who followed the Methodist faith, without knowledge or understanding of his cultural background and story.

It wasn't until the early 1990s that he was able to gain access to information on his biological parents, explains Racquel, and "realised that he was Koori."

"So my own connection with my Afghan/Barkindji roots didn't really emerge until I was about 18. That's when my dad started talking to me about his own personal journey."

There are mixed stories of how Aboriginal and Afghan societies interrelated in outback Australia. According to Christine Stevens, who has studied the cameleers in her book *Tin Mosques and Ghantowns*,

"from their earliest encounters, Australian Afghans considered Aborigines inferior; their simple very basic lifestyle, lack of material comforts and their seemingly undeveloped religious life indicated to the Afghans an inferiority and lack of status."

But Racquel has had story "passed down through word of mouth" of close relationships between the two races, and believes that Afghan men may have even "identified with the customs and laws, society and kinship structure of the Aboriginal people."

According to Stevens, racism and persecution towards both groups from the white administration did mean that the two fragmented societies sometimes took solace in each other.

Towards the turn of the century, the growing belief that Australia was in a dangerous position as a burgeoning 'white' nation within a 'coloured' region,

the Afghan camel men, Australia proved a familiar and workable environment, and their long camel trains remained essential to white man's dream of conquering the land right up until the motorised transport industry finally made them redundant in 1934.

There has been little research done into the history of the Australian camel industry and

"They (the settlers) only write about how these men came to work with the camels, set up the industries and then went back home. They don't acknowledge that some stayed here and that there are descendants from them."

years of careful and race-based policies, what we have come to know as 'history' must surely have been dictated by similar fears and prejudice.

There is no doubt that Racquel feels a sense of belonging to her country; although not in a nationalistic sense. She has an affinity with the land here and appears to view race and cultural identity as part learnt, part chosen and part earned. She does not distinguish between her Afghan and Aboriginal roots, but feels justified in claiming a connection to this country because her ancestors traversed, lived from and walked the land here.

Racquel would argue that Australian 'indigeness' has become complex and multifaceted concept. "It's a hotly debated issue," she explains, "because to be legally recognised as an Aboriginal, you must personally identify as Aboriginal, but you must also be identified by a community."

In many areas however, white infiltration and subsequent intermarriage has meant that 'community' is no longer a definable entity. "It's an issue that many people face...especially in NSW and Victoria, because those areas were the first to be settled."

Currently studying Aboriginal Management Policy through the University of South Australia, Racquel hopes to one day go into film production, in order to "explore the many issues that make up Aboriginality," such as "family, culture, country, landscape, whether that be in a spiritual, practical or political sense," and to normalise the idea of a complex Aboriginality.

Above all, in building her own story, she hopes to explore and integrate the paths of her ancestors, by reuniting with her father's family, "one day."

"My dad's passed away now," she explains, "he died early. So I think that's also a driving force to constantly, and gently, find out about his history."



Racquel Austin-Abdullah weeks before her son Milosh was born.

allowed racial prejudice to flourish like it never had before. For the cameleers, who had always resided on the very fringes of white society, hostility steadily built until finally, writes Stevens, "the term 'Afghan' began to embody a notion of contempt, of racial inferiority, of uncleanness, brutality, strangeness and fear. The Afghans became the untouchables in a white Australia."

In a letter to a local Broken Hill newspaper at the time, one European Australian implored: "white man can live anywhere and do anything a 'nigger' can do...so why bring them out?"

In truth of course, many of the early European settlers found Australia's arid landscapes hostile and harsh. But just as the desert was a rich and seasonal home for the local indigenous people; for

Racquel knows that so many stories have already been lost,

"they only write about how these men came to work with the camels, set up the industries and then went back home. They don't acknowledge that some stayed here and that there are descendants from them."

The contribution and involvement of different cultures in the development of Australia has long been a bit of a taboo in this country, but the legacy of cultural and racial diversity that is left by immigration is often an even less acknowledged subject area.

Descendants of immigrants are encouraged to loosen ties with their cultural roots and "become Australian". But just as the predominantly Anglo-Celtic makeup of today's Australia is a result of

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US govt implicit in Iraq human rights abuses

JASON LEOPOLD

In 1989 the State Department released a report that described in detail Iraq's violation of human rights, specifically how Iraq's President Saddam Hussein tortured his own people for allegedly being disloyal.

Despite the atrocities outlined in the report, which President George W Bush now refers to when speaking about his desire to remove Hussein from power, the United States, under the administration of George Bush senior, refused to vote in favour of a United Nations resolution calling for an inquiry into Iraq's treatment of its population and possibly indicting Hussein for war crimes and human rights abuses.

In fact, the two people most vocal about refusing to go along with the UN investigation lobbied for a UN resolution authorizing an invasion of Iraq and were highly critical of the countries that refused to back a US led coalition using military force to remove Hussein from power.

Those men were Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage.

In 1989, the first Bush administration refused to join the UN in publicly protesting the forced relocation of at least half a million ethnic Kurds and Syrians in the late 1980s, even though the act violated principles of the 1948 Genocide Convention, according to Middle East Watch, a human rights organisation.

The Bush and Reagan administrations also declined to

punish Iraq when it used poison gas against Iranian soldiers in 1984 and Kurdish citizens in 1988. Moreover, the US did not oppose the fact that Hussein bought 45 American helicopters, worth about \$US200 million, with assurances they were for civilian use, then transferred them to his military.

Armitage said in 1990 that "in retrospect, it would have been much better at the time of their use of gas if we'd put our foot down," according to an August 1990 story in the Los Angeles Daily News.

Despite US intelligence reports that showed Iraq's capability of building weapons of mass destruction and its inhumane treatment of its own civilians, the Bush Administration turned a blind eye and instead focused on improving US relations with Hussein. The US removed Iraq from its list of countries supporting terrorism in 1983, which reopened the door to federal subsidies and loans to Iraq.

Saddam Hussein "made it clear that Iraq was not interested in making mischief in the world," said Rumsfeld, who as a Middle East envoy for the Reagan Administration, re-opened discussions with Saddam in 1983.



IMAGE: HEINRICH HINZE

The first Bush administration refused to join the UN in publicly protesting the forced relocation of at least half a million ethnic Kurds and Syrians in the late 1980s, even though the act violated principles of the 1948 Genocide Convention.

"It struck us as useful to have a relationship with him."

Under Rumsfeld's watch during his years in the Reagan and Bush administrations, he and the former presidents

allowed Hussein to build his army and a cache of chemical and nuclear weapons. In fact, many of the hawks that serve in the current Bush Administration assisted Hussein's regime in reaching these goals during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

For example, "the US extended \$US270 million in government-guaranteed credit from the Export-Import Bank to buy other American goods, despite repeated failures to make loan repayments on time" according to Judicial Watch, a non-profit, public interest law firm.

"Since 1982, Baghdad has become one of the biggest buyers of US rice and wheat, purchasing \$US5.5 billion in crops and livestock with federally guaranteed loans and agricultural

subsidies and its own hard cash."

"Iraq benefited from a thriving grain trade with American farmers, co-operation with US intelligence agencies, oil sales to American refiners that helped finance its military, and muted White House criticism of its human rights and war atrocities," according to a *Daily News* story.

Armitage admitted as far back as 1990 that the Reagan and Bush administrations were well aware of Hussein's brutality, but still, the US was more interested in maintaining a healthy relationship with Iraq because the country's vast oil reserves were beneficial to US interests.

"We knew this wasn't the League of Women Voters," Armitage said, referring to Hussein's regime.

The anti-fascist fascist

TOM DOIG

Jim sat in Harrison's living room, surrounded by strangers. There was a poster of Che Guevara stuck to one of the red walls. People were drinking out of Chairman Mao memorial mugs.

A man in a poloneck and little round glasses was talking passionately. "We've got to free the means of production, and the only way this can be achieved is through renewed grassroots agitation. We need Marxist lawnmowers and revolutionary livestock!"

"Did you just say that?" The man turned to look at Jim.

"My name's Abe. I live here. You are?"

"Cynic, I mean, a friend of Harrison's

"So what do you know about Marxist landowners?" Everyone looked at Jim. He gulped. "Well, uh, these days we're all good

Trotskyists at heart, aren't we?" Abe stared into Jim's eyes. He spoke slowly and clearly. "Actually, Jim, that's exactly right. We are." Everyone smiled.

A large, mis-shapen penny rolled off the coffee table and fell onto the carpet. "You must be..."

"The President of the Auckland University Trotskyist Workist Liberated Front, yes. Harrison had mentioned me?" "More or less." A guy in a Waikato rugby jersey jumped up, swaying, beer raised high in the air.

"2-4-6-8, we must crush the fascist state!"

Everyone clank and drank. Abe smiled. "Have you met my good friend, comrade Kane?" Jim shook his head. Kane shook his hand. Kane was full of enthusiasm. He was a beer-drinking, rugby-playing kind of Trotskyist. "Fascists out! We've got to shut down the fascists. We've got to shut them down!"

"Why?"

"They don't want us to speak. Fascists out! We've got to act first, before they shut us down!" "You... fascist!" "No, you don't under-

stand. The fascists are anti-democratic. They want to shut everybody down.

"We've got to shut them down."

"But, you're talking like, like an anti-fascist... fascist!"

"No, they're the fascists. They won't let us speak. We're talking about freedom. Freedom and the revolution!"

Abe raised his mug in a salute, spilling wine on the coffee table. "To the workers' revolution!" Everyone clank and drank and cheered and yelled and rolled their own way to revolution (with personal pouches of tobacco). The room filled with red smoke. When it cleared, Harrison was standing in the doorway with a bottle of vodka. "Harrison!"

"Hey Jimbo, sorry I'm late... you know. How've you been?" Jim looked around helplessly. "Your flatmate..."

"Yeah, it's a bit like that Harrison sighed. "I'll get us some glasses eh?"

Jim helped Harrison with the vodka. So did Abe and Kane. Before they knew it, the vodka was gone. Kane passed out on the

coffee table. Harrison came back from the bathroom, upset. "I can't believe it! I left my razors in the bathroom, and some fuckhead used them all!"

"That's what you get for leav-

Everyone clank and drank and cheered and yelled and rolled their own way to revolution (with personal pouches of tobacco).

ing them in a public space," Abe said calmly, glancing at the carpet. "I keep my razors locked up in my bedroom, where no-one can get them Jim bent down to pick the penny up off the floor. It wasn't a penny at all. It had Lenin's face on one side, and Mussolini's on the other.

Abe snatched the coin off Jim and put it in his wallet. "I thought you were a Communist!" Jim cried.

"Not a Communist. A



Trotskyist."

"Don't you believe property is theft?"

"Not when it comes to my razors."

"If you were a good Trotskyist," Jim persisted, "shouldn't you be inviting bums in off the street and shaving them for the revolution?"

Abe smiled. "Only if they're good Trotskyist bums!"

"Mate, you can STICK IT up your good Trotskyist -"

"Jim!" Harrison warned. "Chill out, man. You're turning into an anti anti-fascist fascist fascist."

"Isn't it more complicated than that?"

"No!"



Pledge to Get More Water Flowing Towards the Poor

At the opening session of the Third World Water Forum, which ran from March 16-23, Egypt's Minister for Water Resources and Irrigation, Mahmoud Abu-Zeid, called on delegates from more than 160 countries to take action to give the poor a taste of the 'Blue Revolution'. "We must take the lead and make the hard choices to establish priorities," urged Abu-Zeid, "economic poverty and water poverty are synonymous."

The forum is establishing programmes based on the targets agreed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg last year regarding water and sanitation.

Leaders agreed at Johannesburg to halve the number of people without access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation by 2015. The UN says 1.1 billion people lack access to safe water, and 2.4 billion people to proper sanitation. Some 2.2 million people in the developing world, mostly children, die every year as a result, the UN says.

"At any one time it is estimated that half of the world's hospital beds are occupied by patients suffering from water-borne diseases," the Geneva-based Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council says in a background note distributed at the forum. The council estimates that if the water poor are not helped with specific programmes, 2.7 billion people - a third of the world's population - will be hit by water shortages by 2025. *ips*

Solar Power Project for Thailand

When Thailand's largest solar power plant begins producing energy in March next year, it will be placed in a new spotlight as the leader of this form of alternative energy in South-east Asia. The plant being built in northern Mae Hong Son province is the work of the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT).

"It is a sign that the government is interested in looking into renewable energy sources like solar energy," says Jiragorn Gajasen, who heads the South-east Asia office of Greenpeace, the global environmental lobby. Yet that does not mean the plant in northern Thailand marks a clear shift in the country's energy policy that remains dependent on natural gas and hydroelectric power, adds Jiragorn. "It is more symbolic."

The Mae Hong Son solar power plant will have the capacity to generate five megawatts, bringing the country's total solar energy capacity to 10 megawatts by 2004.

A Suspicious Death in Detention

32 year old Amed Alshamiri, from Iraq, had been waiting for 1 year and 8 months to get out of the detention camp on Nauru. Finally he was accepted by New Zealand given a visa. Last Thursday he was waiting for the plane to finally take him away from Nauru. As everyone else was lining up to get on the plane he was removed

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Sex and drugs and a good read

CHEMICAL PALACE

by Fiona McGregor

REVIEW BY DANIEL GLOAG

It smells of an age where the written word is appearing increasingly and irretrievably in electronic mediums. Occasionally whole pages of the novel are devoted to the representation of flyers, newspaper articles and song lyrics. One such page is useful activities for the restless speed freak; another two are completely covered by repetition of the phrase: Have fun, keep going... keep creating.

Sidestep any Irvine Welsh connotations in the title. The most recent novel by Fiona McGregor delivers an artistic sophistication more redolent of James Joyce. Chemical Palace was published by the reputable Allen & Unwin in September 2002, following two previous novels of McGregor's, *Au Pair* and *Suck My Toes*. The creative talent suggested in the previous novels is fully explored in Chemical Palace.

The novel traces the lives of half a dozen Sydney fringe-dwellers. Bee, Billy, Slip, Jimi, the Professor and traffic as they flow through two decades of the inner city. The characters work bars, play in bands, dj at dance parties and deal drugs. Most of them are queer. They are creative people, and sometimes spend pages together arranging the decorations for their latest party. traffic (with a lowercase name) is the main character. Her vitality is infectious. It is through her that the multiplicity of other characters are entwined.

The book weighs in at almost 400 pages, but don't expect much in the way of a plot. traffic falls in and out of love and lust. Holmes moves down the south coast of New South Wales. There are many poignant

descriptive passages; often these centre around a couple in bed or at home. Occasionally events build upon each other, then the tension elapses in a natural way. It's important not to merely read this novel like an ordinary book. In resemblance to the classic *Naked Lunch* by William Burroughs, it is just as enjoyable to open the book at a random spot and begin reading.

The stylistic specialisations of Chemical Palace are innumerable. The format is as sartorially conscious as its characters. There are no chapters. Instead, frequent page breaks distinguish periods of focus upon individual characters. It smells of an age where the written word is appearing increasingly and irretrievably in electronic mediums. Occasionally whole pages of the novel are devoted to the representation of flyers, newspaper articles and song-lyrics. One such page is useful activities for the restless speed freak; another two are completely covered by repetition of the phrase: Have fun, keep going... keep creating.

The style of the prose varies. In the description of a party, sentences flow together with minimal punctuation and adjectives. At other times McGregor presents thoughtful paragraphs replete with exquisite and



uncommon detail of the physical environment.

And the chemicals? They are all here in great quantity: Crystal, Speed, Pot, Ecstasy, Heroin. One of the successes of the novel is that they are presented relatively without glamour. There are no fatal overdoses, but there are bad experiences. traffic gets evicted by her housemates for drug dealing. There is also plenty of bisexuality, fisting and anal sex, but this is portrayed with relative indifference. Most of these

scenes are closer to being touching than shocking.

The reader is left resounding with the brilliant colours and nuances of an Australian subculture. The book lends itself wonderfully to re-reading, and so the colours are not lost. With this novel, Fiona McGregor not only jumps to the foreground of Australia's fringe novelists, but also earns a place amongst the mainstream. Consider Chemical Palace for a spot on your coffee table.



Letters

Send to: PO Box 1733 Collingwood, VIC 3066, or letters@thepaper.org.

Drop us a line with comments or complaints, rants and ideas. Maximum length should be around 200 words.

IN RESPONSE TO RICK WILLIAMS ('THIS LAND IS MY LAND'):

Williams argues that his family has an 'unbroken' connection with the country his family has farmed for generations, and that the Yorta Yorta connection to this same land has been severed. This is in accordance with the Olney decision, which also failed to recognise the determination of the Yorta Yorta people to sustain their relationship with land from which they were dispossessed in the 1800s.

Williams challenge is, I think, an important one (Do you think... someone of European origin [can] have a connection with this land equal to that of its original inhabitants?)

Leaving aside the question of 'equal', I would answer yes, I do think that non-indigenous Australians have formed strong

emotional attachments to this place, over the course of a very short history.

And I think non-indigenous Australians need to draw on those connections in order to empathise with the deep connections Indigenous Australians feel to their country, and to imagine the grief associated with losing country.

A successful Yorta Yorta Native Title Claim would not have dispossessed the Williams family; it would have provided the opportunity for Indigenous and non-indigenous people from that community to negotiate sharing the land.

Eve Vincent,
Footscray.

GRAFFITI PRAISE

Having recently moved to Melbourne I've been struck by

the tremendously engaged graffiti on the city's walls and fences. It often feels like the streets are being used as a forum for urban political debate and I like to imagine a youngster, can of spray paint in hand, weighing up the pros and cons of signing the Kyoto protocol or providing a few helpful hints for state premier Steve Bracks.

It really feels civilised that Melburnians can decorate a humdrum piece of wall with murals that cross political divisions and don't fall back on crude or profane language.

Compare this to Messrs Bush, Blair and Howard who seem determined to have their say in the middle east by painting the Iraqi streets with the blood of the enslaved citizens of Baghdad.

N.C.Parkinson
Coburg

BIO DIESEL

Something for everyone dependent on fossil fuel: canola, ethanol and lye that runs diesel motors. (the way Diesel wanted it)

This proven and well documented alternative has virtually no pollution, (although you smell like a fish and chip shop) is easy enough to make in the garage (with a modest investment for mixing the stuff) and detaches yourself from the oil grid. Currently there are over 500 German petrol stations serving up bio diesel so watch out!

We need to formulate a co-op of like minded people eager to clean their consciousness of our unsustainable lifestyle. Check out www.veggievan.org and start the real revolution. Now's the time.

Hans Lovejoy
Brunswick

Café Americano

Since coffee was first traded internationally 600 years ago, there has never been a slump as bad or as long as this one. Children are dying and companies are profiting. PIP STARR is travelling through the America's investigating the coffee trail.

The dregs of café americano (that's Spanish for bad coffee) sit rapidly cooling in the bottom of a very big paper cup. We are in Seattle on a mission. To hunt down a spokesperson for Starbucks. Along with a couple of mates, I've emptied a few spray-cans onto Melbourne's walls protesting the domination of Australian culture by another American multi-national. Now I'm on Starbucks home ground I thought it would be OK to pass a few bucks to the empire and taste their coffee.

I know from my research that Starbucks sell fair trade coffee. It is "brewed as coffee of the day once a month and on request", so I asked for it. The first person I asked looked at me a bit weird. I thought it was the accent, but it turned out she must have been new. She didn't know what fair trade was.

I could only get a litre and a half of it and it would cost me the equivalent of \$62 Australian dollars. So I passed up on the fair trade and had a normal unfairly traded coffee instead.

The regular size was huge, what they miss in quality they try to make up for in quantity. The coffee was dreadful. Good to be able to add taste to my list of objections to Starbucks.

But apparently Americans don't agree. They can't get enough of it. The line at the coffee counter was constantly reinventing itself. The cash register happily tinkling away its accompaniment to the Kenny G Christmas tape. The passion for bad coffee in America is a very real thing, and there are some important facts to back up what I'm saying.

Coffee has always been a volatile commodity. Largely because it grows on a tree. When coffee prices are up, more trees are planted. The trees don't fruit for up to five years so prices stay up. The trees eventually ripen and coffee prices go down, or depending on how much encouragement the extra plantings have had, it plummets. It is currently at its lowest price for 100 years.

The reasons for this relate to end of cold war. Vietnam is the world's second largest coffee bean producer, second only after Brazil. The USSR had been the largest supporter of the Vietnamese economy, and with the decline of the USSR the only real source of money in the world for Vietnam became the World Bank and the IMF. But the USA had placed a boycott on the country, forcing Vietnam to embrace a neo liberal agenda.

Privatisation of land, winding back of government monopolies and the increase of exports for northern markets were all necessary.

The initiative for planting coffee trees came from the Vietnamese government and the growers response to what were then good prices. Support came from the World Bank, France's development bank, the Asia Development bank and US AID.

I ran into the director of the US AID in El Salvador. US AID is participating in a programme to develop organic coffee production in El Salvador. Too late for most growers who are deserting their dying farms, and too late for the tens of thousands of itinerant workers who will have to do without their largest source of yearly income, but for those farmers already rich enough to survive this crisis it might mean a future for them in coffee.

Some people allege that US AID contributed to the crisis by promoting the use of high yielding coffee varieties which are dependent on US made pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers. The USA's withdrawal from the ICO in 1989 is primarily responsible for the collapse of the coffee market.

The ICO was an agreement held to by all the major producing and consuming countries to keep world coffee prices stable by keeping the lowest quality coffee beans from the market. It was

The United States imports one fifth of the world's coffee. But they don't have much concern for what it is, and with new technology eliminating the worst flavours and the use of flavour additives, the lower levels of coffee are now flooding their market.

introduced by President Kennedy in 1962 in an attempt to stabilise volatile economies, thereby decreasing the temptation to accept financial support from the USSR.

The United States imports one fifth of the world's coffee. But they don't have much concern for what it is, and with new technology eliminating the worst flavours and the use of flavour additives, the lower levels of coffee are now flooding their market. Europe, Japan and Australia are very concerned with what they drink, and buy the best of the crop.

Nestle made promises to buy huge amounts of coffee from Vietnam, if only they could produce it. The Vietnamese did this but Nestle changed their mind, leaving the Vietnamese with a hill of beans.

I met a little boy in El Sal-

vador the other day. About five years old. Neither him nor his mother know anything about the ICO, the world bank or Vietnam. He used to work during the coffee harvest, as everybody did. All hands would grab the red berries and the family would be able to keep food on the table, and maybe make enough extra to buy shoes, or clothes and medicines if they were needed.

But there's no harvest this year. Many of the fincas are deserted. In this region the UN food programme is making up the difference. So he's not starving. He's lucky. I ask him what he wants to do when he grows up. He gives me a funny look, then looks back to his friend. I want to pick coffee, he says, with a look that says 'of course. what sort of a question is that?'. A question that every kid gets asked 3 times a day where I come from seems not so



WWW.COFFEEGEEKS.COM

sumer demand for about 20% of fair trade certified coffee. For this reason the books have been closed until demand increases. I haven't been in Melbourne for 4 months now, but on my searches for fair trade before I left I could not find a single fair trade bean.

The coffee sold by Friends of the Earth was East Timorese organic but the price paid to coffee growers in East Timor is now lower than was paid by its genocidal military dictatorship which controlled the coffee monopoly. Even Friends of the Earth can not claim with any certainty that its coffee is not as exploitative as Starbucks or Nestle.

But fair trade is not available in Australian Starbucks yet. Australian coffee drinkers don't seem to care how many children have to miss school to pluck their beans.

I asked a woman in El Salvador if she had a message for coffee drinkers in Australia. Three of her children have died from malnutrition related diseases. The children she has are being fed by the UN. Her house is a shack made of sticks, black plastic and a few sheets of tin. The family diet, with UN help is maize, bananas, beans, rice and vitamin fortified vegetable oil. "Please pay us a decent price for our coffee so we don't all starve to death," she simply said.

World Briefs

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and locked up. When the plane had departed the guards let him go and it was then that he realised that he had been left behind. He was taken by guards and locked up again.

Detainees report that Amed was denied access to the plane as punishment for talking to a journalist who made a film which showed the appalling conditions of the camp on the SBS Dateline program. Detainees report that the guards told him he was being punished for appearing in the film.

He was not seen for days and then one of the casual workers approached the detainees and told them that their friend had died two days before. IOM and DIMIA have kept his death secret. The detainees do not know how or why he died. project.safec.com

Activist Killed in Gaza

Rachel Corrie, 23 year old activist with the International Solidarity Movement in Gaza, was deliberately run over by an Israeli Forces bulldozer when she tried to prevent a home demolition, and was killed.

According to activists who were with her, she was in dialogue with the operator of the bulldozer in the spirit of non-violence, the guiding principle of the ISM. The ISM provides support for Palestinian civilians and for nonviolent efforts to bring about justice for Palestine.

She climbed up on the bulldozer, to talk to the soldier in the cockpit. She climbed down and sat in front of the bulldozer. The soldier in control of the huge machine drove it deliberately over her. On that day a Palestinian man in Rafah and an adolescent in Khan Yunis were killed as well.

www.indymedia.org

Humanitarian Agencies Prepare Relief Efforts

International humanitarian agencies are preparing a major emergency deployment for assisting refugees, in the countries neighbouring Iraq.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) has 30 emergency response units on stand-by to deal with any influx of refugees caused by the United States-led war on Iraq. The units consist of field hospitals, clinics, and water and sanitation services, and "can provide assistance to upwards of one million people in a period of one month," said IFRC Secretary-General Didier Cherpitel.

The contingency planning of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees meanwhile, initially foresees relief efforts for 600,000 refugees in the case of a conflict in Iraq.

Executive Director of the UN children's fund (UNICEF), Carol Bellamy, complained that the Iraq crisis had "virtually blocked out every other emergency in the world. "Donors have been reluctant to commit resources to other major humanitarian emergencies because they're uncertain how much they might be asked to do for Iraq," she said.

ART: CULT

Solaris: an excess of dead space

CHRIS POVEY critiques Stephen Soderbergh's film.

At the very least, the new Stephen Soderbergh film *Solaris* has an interesting pitch. A thinking space movie. A space movie for lovers. *Solaris* screenwriter and director Stephen Soderbergh told online indie film mag *Film Threat* that: "my whole pitch to James Cameron's company, because they

owned the rights, [was:] if we do our jobs right [it will be] a combination of 2001 and *Last Tango in Paris*'. Nice.

And while the man behind the bloated epic *Titanic* must have been excited by this prospect, there were surely many others who were a bit concerned about

this last tango on a spaceship. This spaceship also came loaded with the creative baggage of an original sci-fi novel by Stanislaw Lem and the 1972 classic film by Russian master Andrei Tarkovsky. As Soderbergh explained to Peter Thompson of Channel 9's Sunday Program: "I've already been accosted on the street by somebody who told me I should be ashamed of myself for even attempting to do this".

Lem lamented the Soderbergh remake on his official website: "to my... knowledge, the book was not dedicated to erotic problems of people in outer space". But what we get is a love story. In space.

Psychologist Chris Kelvin (George Clooney) winds up on the space station *Prometheus* because there is nobody

Kelvin himself; she actually exists and is able to interact with the characters on the ship. Clooney conveys a genuine feeling of loss, sadness and confusion by the return of Rheya who admits, "I'm not the person I remember". Gordon complicates this situation by insisting that Kelvin's dead wife is an alien and should be shot with her ray gun.

The past life and problems of Kelvin and Rheya is told warmly through flesh-toned filters and leaves you feeling as if life on earth is far more interesting than the cool tint of space. The film raises genuinely interesting questions about loss and humanity; however it is excruciatingly slow. Once questions are posed within the fabric of the narrative they remain unanswered. We are left with only the colour and look of the film. It isn't enough.

Despite its rich heritage, this new *Solaris* is a cinematic vacuum – attractive film with undeveloped ideas and an excess of dead space.

else to do the job. Exactly why he is the "ideal candidate" is originally a mystery. Exactly what is wrong with *Prometheus* is also unexplained. Crew member Gilbarian, while appealing for help, observes that he is unable to describe what is happening and that despite the fact that the most obvious solution would be to leave, the crew is not going anywhere.

Soderbergh has created a slick ambient space film, paying incredible attention to surfaces and colour. As Kelvin approaches *Prometheus*, the massive structure twists silently and a digital universe burns with explosive colour in the background. The film provides a soundscape of mellow electronic beats and the beautiful Dylan Thomas poem "And Death Shall Have No Dominion" weaves its way effectively through the narrative. The universe constructed by Soderbergh is both about space, and of space.

Kelvin boards the *Prometheus* and is confronted by body bags and screaming. He then meets the drug-fucked Snow (played by professional quirky guy Jeremy Davies) who informs him that this ship does not make sense and that he does not make sense. There's also the cheerful Doctor Gordon (Viola Davis), who elevates paranoia to an art form. You get the impression that Kelvin may well find the *Prometheus* a challenge.

Things don't get any easier when Kelvin's dead wife Rheya (Natascha McElhone) turns up.

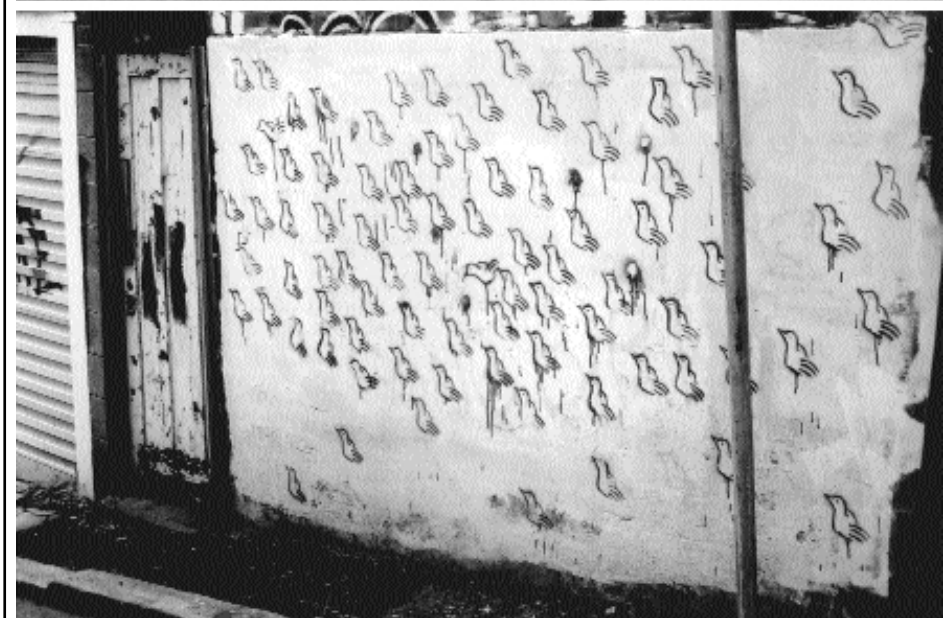
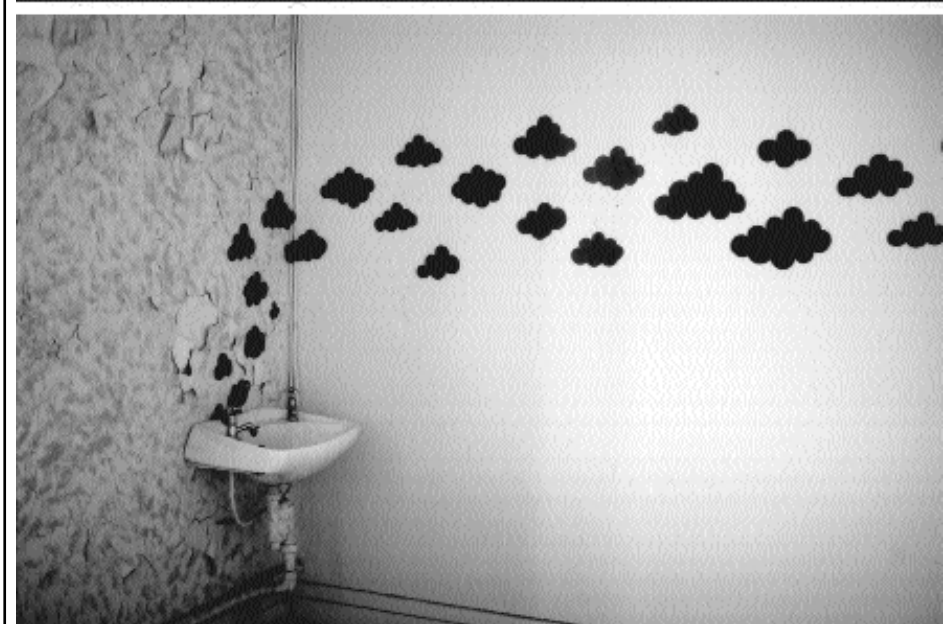
The problem is attributed to the voodoo planet *Solaris* that can be seen in vivid colour from the window of *Prometheus*. It is able to read people and to realise their fears, anxieties and insecurities... and personify them.

Interestingly, the appearance of Kelvin's wife occurs not only in dreams, nor to

While discussing the process of writing the screenplay, Soderbergh stated to *Film Threat*: "I'm using both the film and the book that it's based on. Also, again, there are several preoccupations of my own that I'm laying in". Perhaps he was referring to his optimistic ending that differs from both the book and Tarkovsky film. Lem comments on his website that this ending amounts to a "concession to the stereotypes of American thinking regarding science fiction. It seems that these deep, concrete ruts of thinking cannot be avoided: either there is a happy ending or a space catastrophe".

The comments of Lem are amusing in light of his admission that he had not actually seen the Soderbergh film at the time of his statement and further, because he was apparently unimpressed with the Tarkovsky film (which is widely acknowledged as a cinematic classic).

Nonetheless, it is risky when considering a cultural product to become distracted by its antecedents. While comparisons with Tarkovsky and comments from Lem are interesting, the Soderbergh's *Solaris* is obviously a separate work. Despite its rich heritage, this new *Solaris* is a cinematic vacuum – attractive film with undeveloped ideas and an excess of dead space.



The cloud room - www.themphshow.org, bird stencils and tag mastery Paddington Sydney. Photo's: Tom Civil

Public dismay over 'public art'

JASON BRAYSHAW questions the ability of public art to engage with its broader social and historical contexts in Melbourne's western suburbs.

Public art, or 'high impact art', such as the Ron Robertson-Swann sculpture Vault, (perhaps better known under the moniker of The Yellow Peril) and more recently Fields of Gold; a series of sculptures designed by Burne Hocking Weinmar Architects, continues to create dismay and confusion due to its inability to capture the relevant community and suburban landscapes.

Recently, local residents in Melbourne's north-west expressed feelings of anger and embarrassment toward Fields of Gold, which they feel is an insult to the community and instils no sense of pride or identity in the neighbourhood.

Such embarrassment certainly comes as no surprise to those already familiar with the concept of 'public art'. And more often than not, though the intentions may be sincere, the work is quickly written off as an expensive exercise in self-indulgence, at the behest of local councils. Further arguments have alluded to the notion that those who accept the offer of being commissioned to undertake public art projects are merely being utilised to fill in an unsightly landscape.

In the case of Fields of Gold (which can be observed at the Tullamarine and Calder freeway intersection, and the Western Ring Road and Calder Freeway), the total

project has been reputed to have cost US\$180,000. For such an expensive project, what exactly does Fields of Gold aim to represent?

The intention of this sculpture was to historically represent the hope and expectations of travelling to the Victorian Goldfields in the 1850s. The sculptured artwork is two of a total of six public artworks, costing a total of US\$90,000 each across the western suburbs. In its initial stages, Fields of Gold was first commissioned under the Images of the West project. An arts scheme involving the Department of Infrastructure (DOI) and the

The only artistic expression Fields of Gold might hope to convey is the graffiti that will be inflicted upon it. Ironically, at least that could be regarded as an artistic expression.

Moonee Valley, Maribynong, Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Melton and Wyndham local councils enabled the production of the work.

The Images of the West projects aimed to be representative of the characteristics of the area, be they residential, industrial, multicultural, sporting or business related. Other submissions were also submitted along the lines

of a 'transition' theme. From this, Fields of Gold was chosen, designed by Burne Hocking Weinmar Architects. Yet it should also be acknowledged that the creators of the two sculptures admit the pink used was the wrong shade, failing to represent the sunset over the western basalt plains.

No disrespect to the architectural profession, but instead of true artistic vision presented by western Melbourne's cutting edge, we are left with cold austerity designed by corporate architects. Furthermore, the only artistic expression Fields of Gold might hope to convey is the graffiti that will be inflicted upon it. Ironically, at least that could be regarded as an artistic expression. However, the intentions of the organising committee may have been true in their attempt to bring together the diversity of Melbourne's west suburban demographic. Moonee Valley Council's environment and urban design manager David Dreadon has said the committee wanted western region firms to express an interest in the public art project but did not receive suggestions from them.

If local councils want to commission public artwork that resonates with some meaning and is artistically valued, perhaps they should find the wisdom to seek a process of dialogue and exchange between residents genuinely interested in public art and the artists themselves. Despite its clichéd working-class image, Melbourne's western suburbs have a thriving artistic community. Where was their invitation? Surely if this is about public artwork, shouldn't local artists within the community be given first priority?

Off Stream filmmaker's community in Indonesia

The Paper's Indonesian correspondent MARGIYONO spoke to filmmaker Lexy Rambadeta in Jakarta about the processes behind his activist films and his work with Off Stream.

Working for corporate media like the Associate Press TV News (APTN) guaranteed a good salary, but did not satisfy Indonesian journalist Lexy Rambadeta. According to Rambadeta, the corporate media turns its eyes only to profit and ignores humanity. After leaving APTN in 2001, Rambadeta decided to shape his own progressive filmmaker's community, called Off Stream.

"We produce alternative stories: opposite to mainstream stories. Our stories preserve people whose voice is unnoticed. That is why our maxim is 'voice of the voiceless,'" said Rambadeta who now works as a freelance filmmaker for SBS' Date Line.

However, beginning work in the domain of independent film is a difficult task. Rambadeta spent his own money to produce his first documentary film, Mass Grave. Mass Grave documents people who buried the bones of family members who were murdered by the militia when General Soeharto took power in 1965. Soeharto, who was backed by the IMF, World Bank and multinational corporations, killed more than one million people during his coup.

Fortunately, Rambadeta's sacrifice has been fruitful. Jakarta International Film Festival screened Mass Grave, while Indonesia's Community of Independent Film honoured the film for its 'brave

work'. The Indonesian Commission for Human Rights screened Rambadeta's film last week, asserting that the film is an 'essential work... correcting Indonesia's dark history of... mass killing'. The film has been successful in promoting issues of social justice. 'Off



According to Rambadeta, the corporate media turns its eyes only to profit and ignores humanity.

Stream's Mass Grave is very good work on [the] human rights campaign in Indonesia. We used it to campaign for Soeharto's trial for his human rights violation', said Indonesian Commission for Human Rights campaigner Teguh Prasetyono.

Rambadeta's exclusive rushes of the grave digging, which appeared in Mass Grave, was purchased by the Australian filmmaker Chris Hilton, who has been

producing work on the 1995 Indonesian military coup. Rambadeta and Hilton speak a common language, having collaborated previously. In 2002, their collaboration culminated in the successful documentary Shadow Play: Indonesia's Years of Living Dangerously. The film exposed the support given to Soeharto's military coup by British and other multinational corporations.

Off Stream is now finishing two other films: Student Revolt and Involuntary Disappearance. Since 1998, Rambadeta and Daniel Mc Guire have working on

Student Revolt, the documentary of student protest in 1998 that ended with Soeharto's step-down. Involuntary Disappearance is a remembrance of the activists who were kidnapped by military forces during Soeharto's last years.

According to Rambadeta, Off Stream's philosophy is to 'keep on producing even in very difficult conditions'. He explains: 'we used to cover production costs from our own pockets and [from] loans. We

also welcomed grants under the condition that the donor [agreed not to] intervene [in the production of content]'.

Since its inception, Off Stream has produced many films in collaboration with organizations in Indonesia. Such films include Indonesian Comfort Women (2000), Corruption (2001) and 2.5 Billion for the State (2002). Comfort Woman is short piece concerning sexual slavery during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia during WWII. Corruption portrays the fraud that is epidemic amongst Indonesia's bureaucrats, employing hidden cameras in its search for truth. 2.5 Billion is concerned with the 'labour trading' that constitutes Indonesia's second largest source of income.

Besides filmmaking, Off Stream also organises necessary media training for individuals and organisations. In 2002, Off Stream, in partnership with some Indonesian non-government organisations, developed Democracy Video Group, a network employing video formats as campaign tools. "We have many creative ideas, but we... lack... human resources. Fortunately we are young and workaholics", surmised Rambadeta. Off Stream is also involved with networking with other progressive filmmakers: "progressive people are usually strong and independent, and we will be stronger if we are linked". Rambadeta explained.

Margiyono is a journalist and is involved with Jakarta Indymedia. He can be contacted at jakarta_raya@hotmail.com.

ART: CULT

Make music, not war

From Adelaide, CAROLYN COURT surveys the March held WOMAD festival, an international conglomerate performing for peace.

Make music, not war – that is the message coming loud and clear from the international music festival called World of Music, Arts and Dance or WOMAD, held this month in Australia and New Zealand, and now travelling throughout the year to Spain, Britain, Italy and Singapore.

More than 65,000 people attended the Australian festival, called WOMADelaide Sounds of the Planet 2003, in Adelaide on March 7–9.

The festival featured 350 artists from 31 countries including India, Burkina Faso, Afghanistan, Mexico, Senegal, Pakistan, Colombia, Algeria, Russia, South Africa, Britain, Canada, Japan and Australia.

While WOMAD is a joyful celebration of the world's music, arts and dance, it is also a political festival allied to a range of political and human rights causes.

"I guess what's important about events like this at times like these is that it's a more positive potential picture of the world", says Rob Brookman, the artistic advisor for WOMADelaide, who believes that while international music festivals might not be able to change the world overnight, they have a role to play in promoting cultural understanding.

The festival becomes "a place where people are actually interested in finding out about each other's cultures and understanding each other, rather than the dominant media paradigm that the United States is trying to manipulate, which is to dehumanise and depersonalise and dumb down any debate or discussion about the issues in relation to Iraq", he adds.

During many of the WOMADelaide festival performances, musicians dwelled on the US led war on Iraq.

The Pacific band Drum Drum, whose members come from Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Australia, introduced one of their songs with this statement: "if ever there was... hypocrisy regarding a war on terror it is now, this music is dedicated with love to all the people and especially

the children of Iraq".

The Mexican ten-piece Latin/Punk band, Los de Abajo, said of WOMADelaide: "this concert is for peace: no war in Iraq". Benin-born musician Julien Jacob conveyed a heartfelt message through an interpreter: "you love life, you are life. At this moment we must think of the people on the other side of the planet".

While international music festivals might not be able to change the world overnight, they have a role to play in promoting cultural understanding.

During the finale of the Australian festival, tens of thousands of people observed a minute's silence, in respect for peace and the victims of war.

Oxfam campaigner Sally McHenry, who was working on the Big Noise Fair Trade campaign at WOMADelaide, says that the atmosphere of WOMAD inspires all who attend. "It sounds like a cliché but [there] really is an atmosphere and environment here [showing] how the world could really be", says McHenry.

Asked about the significance of WOMAD music festivals being held in these times of conflict, US guitar virtuoso Bob Brozman says he sees WOMAD as a political statement as well as a great musical event. "I have some very strong opinions about it actually; one of the hidden values of any music festival is simply the public's right to assemble", he considers.

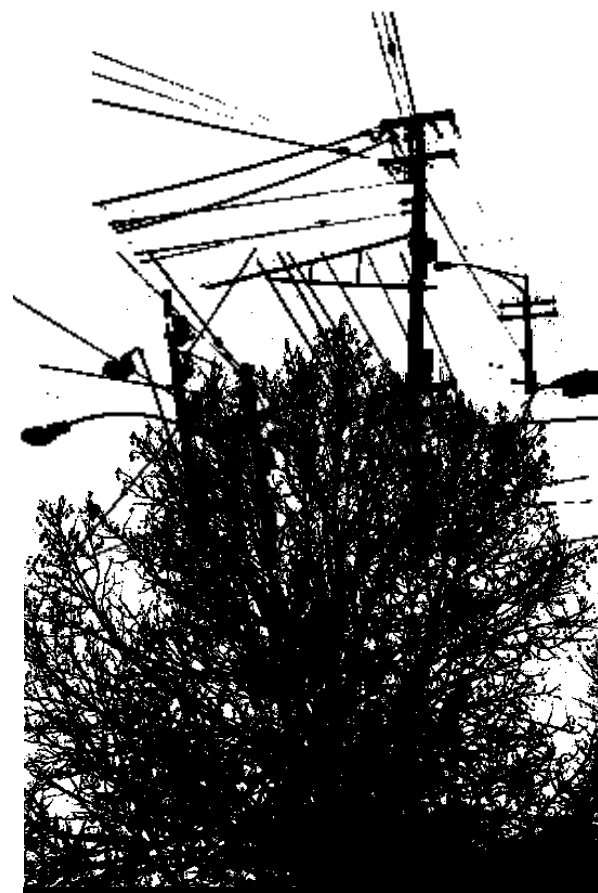
"That's something in my country that's really being eroded. They would rather that people stay at home and watch canned media on television and not form opinions themselves or have any kind of sense of community... with the latest street protests basically being ignored by Bush, it's very frustrating".

"I really feel like music can almost be described as the language of the future, when people are able to better communicate with each other. At a festival like this, there's a lot of collaborations and the communication happens on a much more flowing sort of higher level... more efficient than language", Brozman continues.

Music and art is serving as a bridge of communication amongst different cultures and musical worlds, reflecting concern shared many people regarding about today's uncertainties and the US' attack against Iraq. WOMAD organisers such Brookman see the festival as a great way to promote education and awareness, at the same time as having fun.

This attitude also shaped the selection of visual arts and dance performers, such as "People from Away", a piece explicating issues of refugee policy and racism, which was performed by the Knee High Puppeteers, as well as rarely seen ceremonial corroborees or "inma" such as those performed in Adelaide by the Central Australian Indigenous people, the Anangu Pitjantjatjara.

IPS



Autumn MILES ALLINSON

autumn is a hail of crisp butterflies dying
then rain
and a mulch of soggy wings.

trees bleed light
and open like thighs
for powerlines;
black scars
across a white skin
sky.

i wake to find you
still here
though changed;
all skin and memory now.

summer took from us
a more ready touch
and longing enunciates, the bones
along your back
the sudden fall of your hip
as you lie
somewhere between me and sleep.

our love inhabits stricter worlds
withdrawing behind uncertain boundaries
spilling over in brief flowers
of habit, a touch, half meant
or a sudden brimming of tears
remembering
then returning.

rain steals air
obscures the horizon.

we empty ourselves like trees
bit by bit of the gestures
a more certain desire gave
to the motions of our bodies.
yet our knowledge of each other
is pale sun, getting into everything
illumination the skeleton of leaves,
casting shadows.

my language is pregnant
each word speaks for what my hands can't
touch.

autumn is when the world is sullen with damp
a compost of change
bodies falling silent beside each other.





IS TRUTH THE FIRST CASUALTY OF WAR REPORTING?

MATTHEW DUNN

War reporting has always been bound to an elastic and subjective version of the truth. As one senior official of the British government, in John Pilger's documentary *In Search of Truth in War Time*, said, "Objective reporting? I haven't seen that ever. It may be all and well written up in the ethics books. But on the ground, everyone is subjective."

By its very nature, conflict often polarises views, especially between those attacking and those defending their soil. If reporters represent one of these two sides, their objectivity will be tainted. But what is perhaps more pertinent to the way that reporters present conflict is the censorship they impose on themselves to protect the public and the censorship imposed on them by the military.

In 1920, war correspondent Phillip Gibbs published his account of World War I. Although he vehemently denied that his reporting from the front had been false, he admitted to a careful omission of certain distasteful facts. He did this, so he said, to spare the relatives of those on the battlefield any more suffering than they were already experiencing. Through a moral imperative, the truth was denied.

This kind of reasoning puts the importance of the reader's sensitivities above what is true. It is an argument used by many governments to cover up the bloody nature of war, lest public opinion should turn against them.

A recent and relevant (since history will surely repeat itself) example of this kind of selective reporting occurred during the Gulf

War in 1991. Since the conflict, a truer version of what happened has emerged. It has become clear that the international media (particularly the American, Australian and British contingents) were operating more as an extension of the military's propaganda wing than as an independent and critical entity intent on telling the truth. In fairness, this was due mainly military control of the media. But the fact remains that there is credible evidence to suggest whole battles went unreported, enemy force levels were really twice as big as we were told and claims of success were inflated.

During a 1991 meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, the Gulf War

media coverage was described as little more than an "international humiliation for the profession of journalism".

THE GULF WAR MEDIA COVERAGE WAS DESCRIBED AS LITTLE MORE THAN AN "INTERNATIONAL HUMILIATION FOR THE PROFESSION OF JOURNALISM".

media coverage was described as little more than an "international humiliation for the profession of journalism". The subsequent exposure of fabrications such as Iraqis throwing babies out of incubators left the press embarrassed and beleaguered.

The US Government was only too aware of the risk of a prolonged, televised war. Colin Powell, then chief of the US military, believed that such a televised war would "instantly bring home the action, death and consequences and emotions even more graphically than during Vietnam".

This situation could not be risked, espe-

cially because there was the possibility of a major battle and the risk of high casualties, as Washington, London and Canberra originally believed. As a result, the military imposed the pattern of an initial denial, then the exclusion and constraint of the media.

Censorship was not necessary. The media was simply denied the facts. The most obvious was the imposed 36-hour media blackout on the initial and most vulnerable phase of the deployment.

A directive was also issued by the military that all copy, video footage, recordings or photographs had to be cleared by a security review system prior to transmission. In addition, reporters were banned from press con-

ferences because of questions deemed to be out of bounds. Media access to operational areas was also limited to 90 broadcast and print journalists organised into eleven, military-approved pools. (Non-pool reporters were threatened with being deported or shot if they were found within 99km of the Saudi-Kuwait border without a military escort.)

Reports from this select crew were then sent to the press centre at Dhahran in Saudi Arabia for military review. After this process, which could take several days, the information was made available to the 500 or so other reporters who were confined to Saudi Arabia.

The careful dissemination of information from the military and its control over the press, meant the truth, whatever it was, was as slippery as an eel. Even if it could be trapped, it would be ungraciously crushed under the collective boot of the military censors.

In the context of this restrictive situation, it may be wrong to put the blame for the poor coverage of the war squarely at the feet of the press. As Newsweek's defence correspondent, Colonel David Hackworth, said, "we were like animals in a zoo and the press officers were the zookeepers who threw us a piece of meat occasionally". Given this selective disclosure of information, it must have been almost impossible to construct a credible picture of what was occurring on the ground. Cynically, Hackworth stated that "it was a lovely, bloodless, corpseless, war, just the sort the politicians love".

Just as the US Government imposed a total media ban on the coverage of coffins arriving from the Gulf, so did the Australian Government offer a selective view of the realities of war, filtering reports through a special Gulf media unit, which was controlled by the politicians in Canberra.

This situation hardly gives someone at the bottom of the food chain – such as people not in the upper echelons of government – much faith in what they are being told.

As the next Gulf War approaches, it would seem foolish to believe what we read, hear and see – it will doubtless only be an approximation of the truth. This begs the question, is truth the first casualty of war reporting?

COMMUNITY RADIO MAKES ITSELF HEARD IN RURAL GUATEMALA

ANTHONY JAMES

Thirty-six years of civil war, culminating in a genocidal campaign by a military dictatorship, leave a nation devastated by death, suffering and fear. Further, civil war leaves the majority of a nation's people without any structure or means to direct their lives. Five years ago, at the end of a civil war, this was Guatemala.

The indigenous Maya, still the majority of Guatemala's 11 million people, survived this latest campaign in yet another half-century of extreme exploitation and oppression.

Today, with peace accords signed, open elections have decided the current government. However democracy is based on more than a single election day – it is still buried deep within the power structures that developed during the war.

The United Nations and a plethora of news and aid agencies lament that little has changed in these structures since 1996.

In this context, the remote, rural municipality of Fray Bartolomé de las Casas (Fray) realises it cannot wait for the federal government to fulfill its peace accord promises.

Situated in the north of Guatemala, Fray has a population of around 41,300, 86% of whom are indigenous Q'eqchi'. Despite limited resources, the town is rebuilding its structures of civil participation.

Señor Ceferino de Paz González, ex-guerrilla comandante with the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) and descendant of the indigenous Achi', is current Mayor of Fray as part of the now-legitimised URNG political party. He explains that the rebuilding capitalises on "the collective intelligence of the people".

Fray struggles with economic poverty. The Municipal Planning Office reports that

85% of the families in Fray live in poverty and of these, 75% live in extreme poverty. However, the deeper struggle is one with impoverishment.

Facilitating access to information, and a means for the development of knowledge, understanding and identity is essential in overcoming the multitude of oppressive symptoms of impoverishment – only one of which is economic poverty.

Highlighting the point, the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA), in its June 2001 report on the peace process, reinforced the call for international cooperation in order "to amplify access to the media of expression, especially for indigenous people ...".

One solution is coming in over the air-

WITH FEW ROADS AND 67% ILLITERACY IN FRAY, RADIO IS THE ONLY EFFECTIVE MEANS OF REACHING THE MAJORITY OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES OUTSIDE THE URBAN CENTRE.

waves. Project Community Radio aims to address the root problem of impoverishment by employing a strong media and education program to foster critical thinking, citizenship, and leadership. The project is particularly focused on women, indigenous groups and young people.

The people of Fray will control the implementation of every aspect of operations, including program production and coordination. They'll also receive support from various established structures and organisations locally, nationally and internationally.

The community radio will feature pro-

grams reflecting the many facets of local life and its broader context. It will act as a forum to generate other projects and to encourage discussion of post-war development issues. It will also facilitate the work of social profit institutions that work with young people, women and indigenous groups, and will promote integrated development, including local arts, sports and business.

With few roads and 67% illiteracy in Fray, radio is the only effective means of reaching indigenous communities outside the urban centre. Often families in the most remote communities have their own radio transmitters.

Participation of youth, women and indigenous groups will largely be achieved through schools, institutions and other or-

ganised groups. Under the URNG, much work has already been done in establishing these organisations in Fray. Various incentive programs will also be utilised, including the School Credit Program, which will ensure that young people who contribute to the radio will receive credit for their learning and achievement.

Local municipality employee and teacher, Mildred García, speaks from her experience of educating indigenous communities. Often, "the role of the woman is more or less to find a husband, not pursue an education, for reasons including the fact that newly-weds may apply for small land hold-

ings. As a result, incentives like the School Credit Program are essential."

Through national and international media networks, this project will also allow the voices of Fray to be heard across Guatemala and around the world.

As a low-budget, high-participation project that creates a network structure of civil participation, Project Community Radio has great promise. It has the potential to become a central feature in the promotion and determination of a more aware, inclusive and active community that lives in harmony with itself and its environment.

Much-needed (tax-deductible) donations for this project may be sent to Fray via:

Project Fray Bartolome
Australian Volunteers International (AVI)
PO Box 350
Fitzroy VIC 3065

100% of funds are allocated to the project.

Enquiries may be addressed to the author, or directly (in Spanish) to La Casa de la Cultura de Fray:
claudialorenacastro@latinmail.com.

Anthony James was an AVI volunteer for two years in Guatemala, and is a freelance writer specialising in issues of economic, social and environmental justice relating to globalisation and international development. sharedparadise@yahoo.com



Clicks 'N' Cuts

TUPPY McINTOSH

[17 MAR 03]

TIPTOE THROUGH THE TEMNIKI

New York – The Presidential Administration of Ukraine blatantly violates freedom of expression through explicit instructions on how television stations may cover the news, Human Rights Watch said in a report released today that included examples of these directives.

The forty-eight page report documents the impact of secret instructional memoranda, known as *temniki* (from the Russian phrase, *temy nedeli* [themes of the week]), on the practice of journalism in Ukraine. Prepared and distributed by the Presidential Administration to top managers and editors of national television stations, *temniki* delineate which news topics to cover and how to present them in broadcasts. Non-compliance invites a wide range of informal sanctions, including tax audits, license cancellation, arbitrary libel suits, demonstrations, and pay cuts.

"The Presidential Administration's directives are an insidious form of censorship," said Elizabeth Andersen, executive director of Human Rights Watch's Europe and Central Asia Division. "Millions of viewers in Ukraine fail to receive important information about political, economic, and social developments," said Andersen.

"Since the end of Soviet censorship, a certain degree of media pluralism has emerged in Ukraine," said Andersen. "However, truly independent media outlets are quite rare." www.ifex.org

[09 MAR 03]

TAIMI 'O TONGA KNUCKLE SANDWICH

For 14 years, the *Taimi 'o Tonga* newspaper and publisher Kalafi Moala have been the scourge of the Tongan establishment – exposing abuse of power and oppressive moves designed to snuff out democracy. But when the government banned the New Zealand-based paper as a "prohibited import", hypocrisy and ambivalent support was the order of the day in some Pacific quarters.

The biweekly newspaper which gathers stories from Tongan communities in Australia, New Zealand

and the United States as well as in Tonga, has seen its share of harassment. The Nuku'alofa offices have been raided by police 12 times, editors have been arrested on several occasions, and staff have received threatening phone calls.

Last December, Moala, his Tongan office manager Filokalafi 'Akauola, and pro-democracy MP 'Akilisi Pohiva were awarded a combined US\$26,000 by the Supreme Court in compensation for being jailed unconstitutionally for contempt of Parliament for 26 days in 1996.

But the Tongan Government took its harshest ever step against *Taimi o Tonga* (*Times of Tonga*) late last month when it banned the paper as a "prohibited import" on the grounds that it was seditious and a foreign paper with a political agenda.

Moala has vowed to fight the charges, saying the government had moved to gag the paper because of its relentless exposes of corruption in the kingdom.

His lawyers moved this week to challenge the ban in the Supreme Court under the kingdom's constitution which guarantees free speech. www.asiapac.org.fj

[19 MAR 03]

BIG TED DUMPS DUD ROOT

United States – AOL Time Warner's biggest shareholder Ted Turner has reignited the debate over the future of the world's biggest media company after saying the company might be better off without its troubled internet division, America Online.

Mr Turner also said he was likely to remain on the board when he steps down as vice chairman in May and challenged fellow media veteran Rupert Murdoch to a fist fight.

The outspoken media mogul, who claims to have personally lost up to £5bn as a result of the plummeting value of the company since the merger in 2001, became the latest in a string of AOL Time Warner executives to stand down earlier this year.

"I wonder whether being part of AOL Time Warner is the best way," he said at a breakfast briefing organised by *The New Yorker* magazine. "I can't tell you one company that has had a foot placed in the old media business that has been successful in

the new media business."

The internet division has been blamed for dragging down the company's share price as it battles with a government investigation into accounting errors and struggles to hold on to subscribers and compete in the broadband market.

Despite once describing the merger of the two companies as "better than sex", Mr Turner has since frequently criticised the record-breaking deal.

www.mediaguardian.co.uk

[14 MAR 03]

'I DOWNLOADED IT FOR THE ARTICLES, MA'

United Kingdom – An executive from *The Express*, a British paper akin to Melbourne's *Herald Sun*, was questioned by police as part of a worldwide investigation into internet child pornography is resigning from the company.

Andy Bull, the deputy editor of the *Sunday Express*, had indicated he will hand in his formal resignation this afternoon.

Bull last night confirmed he had been questioned by police as part of a worldwide investigation into child pornography on the internet.

But he denied any involvement with child pornography and said he had "nothing to hide".

Bull was one of 50 people questioned – 43 of whom were arrested – by police on Wednesday as part of Operation Ore, the continuing investigation into child pornography that led to the arrest in January of The Who's Pete Townshend. www.mediaguardian.co.uk

[18 MAR 03]

AYE COLOMBIA!

Colombia – Gunmen shot and killed a radio news host early this morning in a volatile northeastern region of the country. The journalist, who had been threatened previously by members of a right-wing paramilitary army, was also a free-lance reporter for Colombia's most widely read daily.

Luis Eduardo Alfonso Parada, 33, was shot to death at 4:55 a.m. by two gunmen in the town of Arauca, near the Venezuelan border, while he tried to enter his office at Radio Meridiano – 70. Two men were waiting for him there and fled on a motorcycle after the attack, said an Arauca Department police spokesperson.

"We mourn the death of our colleague," said Joel Simon, acting director of the Committee to Protect Journalists. "The Colombian government must pursue the perpetrators of this terrible crime."

In June 2002, presumed para-

military gunmen shot and killed the owner of the station, Efran Varela Noriega. Varela had alerted listeners to the presence of paramilitary fighters in the region days before he was assassinated.

Alfonso co-hosted several news shows broadcast during the day. Since October, he had been covering armed conflict in Arauca Department as a free-lance reporter for *El Tiempo* newspaper, said Álvaro Sierra, an editor at the daily. The conflict, which pits leftist rebels against rival paramilitary combatants and the government, has been going on for nearly 40 years.

Alfonso lambasted all sides of the conflict but was particularly critical of the paramilitary United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), said Miguel Rojas, who worked with Alfonso at Radio *Meridiano-70*. Rojas said Alfonso frequently reported in great detail on paramilitary activity in the region.

"He didn't hold back at all," said Rojas. "I think that's what compromised him."

Fearing for his life, Alfonso fled for the capital, Bogotá, soon after Varela was killed, said Jorge Enrique Meléndez, an *El Tiempo* reporter and a friend of Alfonso's who spoke to him hours before he was killed.

In November 2002, Alfonso's name was one of about 100 that appeared on a list distributed in the town of Arauca by paramilitary fighters, who threatened to kill the people on the list unless they "reformed," said Meléndez. In recent weeks, however, Alfonso had told friends and colleagues that he no longer feared for his life. www.cpj.org

[19 MAR 03]

HEEEERRREE'S AL!

NEW YORK – As the U.S. invades Iraq, journalists in the *San Francisco Chronicle* newsroom are not only be monitoring the war via CNN, Associated Press feeds, and their own overseas correspondents, but also through an unlikely news source: the controversial Al-Jazeera news network.

Al-Jazeera has been accused of being a mouthpiece for Al Qaeda, but is also seen as a leading source for breaking news in the Arab world.

"We may have to hire a translator," Managing Editor Robert Rosenthal speculated as workers were installing the necessary satellite dish Tuesday atop the *Chronicle* building. "We have to see if there are English subtitles."

Rosenthal said the paper decided to get access to the foreign news channel in an effort to get as much information about the Middle East at wartime as possible. "It's an

outside view of the world," Rosenthal said. "It is the view from the Arab world."

Al-Jazeera was founded in 1996 in Qatar and now has an estimated audience of 55 million viewers. www.editorandpublisher.com

[13 MAR 03]

SERBIAN SHUTDOWN

Serbia – A state of emergency declared in Serbia on March 12, following the assassination that day of Serbian prime minister Zoran Djindjic by a sniper in Belgrade, have included restrictions on media freedom.

"I am asking the Army of Serbia and Montenegro, security forces, the judiciary, all media and political parties to unite around these goals [to arrest the assassins]...", Natasa Micić, Acting President, said in a statement. "These measure will remain in force...until the assassins have been arrested."

Article 9 of Micić's executive order states that, "Public information, distribution of press and other information about the reasons for the declaration of the state of emergency is prohibited, excluding carrying the official statements of competent government agencies." This is at a time when many argue the free flow of information and timely reporting on events can help the Serbian people form more informed decisions.

Deputy Prime Minister Zarko Korac met with the editors-in-chief of Belgrade-based media outlets yesterday evening to provide recommendations on news reporting during the state of emergency.

Korac asked editors to report only on official announcements from government agencies, representatives of political parties, or press conferences and requested that the media refrain from reporting on "the reactions of those who will be arrested, their lawyers, and analysts who could complicate the arrests."

Some in Belgrade believe the media restrictions are not as broad as they sound and appear aimed at journalists and media outlets linked to Djindjic's alleged assassins—former special operations commander Milorad Luković and members of the powerful Zemun mafia clan.

"I hope that the state of emergency will end in several days, as was promised to us," Dragan Janjic, editor-in-chief of Belgrade's independent news agency Beta, told CPJ in a telephone interview today. "If it lasts longer, it could lead to pressure on the media not to publish certain types of material."

www.cpj.org

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